



May 13, 2019

Dear York Memorial Parents, Guardians, Community Members, and Alumni:

This week has been a difficult week for everyone. The devastating fire at our school has resulted in many questions about how it happened and what lies in store for the future. I share these concerns with you.

Over the last several days, many of you have shared your personal experiences with me about a school that has contributed so much to the rich history of our community. It has been profoundly moving to hear from the families of our war veterans who spoke of their deep connections to York Memorial. It has also been touching to hear from those who related their personal connections to the generations of my own family that attended York Memorial.

I want to express my sincere thanks to everyone who has reached out offering to provide financial assistance, social support, and advocacy going forward. It has been nothing short of overwhelming to see how many people and organizations have reached out to support York Memorial and its students.

Over the next several weeks our immediate priority is to ensure continuity of learning for current York Memorial students, and to ensure that our graduating students will in fact graduate by the end of June. Our teachers have been working extremely hard in the face of their own grief to make this happen, and I commend them for their dedication and service in this regard.

As we move forward, we need to bring together the various people and community groups who have reached out to support York Memorial. I have consulted with those who have long standing affiliations to York Memorial, such as former and existing staff, alumni, and students. In the coming weeks, I will be coordinating a meeting of the school administration, along with the executives of the Alumni and Parent Council, to begin a process aimed at harnessing all the goodwill that has been expressed over the last few days, and to determine how to best advocate for and support the future of York Memorial.

At the present time we do not know the degree of damage to the building. However, I want to express my unqualified support, for the continuing presence of York Memorial at the corner of Keele and Eglinton, and that it is reconstructed in accordance with all of its pre-existing heritage features. To that end, we will need the support of everyone in advocating to the various levels of government for support to rebuild our school.

I thank all of you for your efforts, and look forward to working with you to build a strong York Memorial for future generations to come. As we move forward together, I think we can all find a deeper resolve and meaning in the York Memorial school motto, “Macte Nova Virtute”, “Go Forward With New Strength”.

In solidarity,



Chris Tonks
TDSB Trustee, York South-Weston